



Why is Worksite Wellness Important

Focusing on health promotion programs in the worksite can be an effective way of spreading health, nutrition and physical activity messages.

Benefits for Worksites/Employers include:

- Enhanced employee productivity
- Lower health care costs
- Decreased rates of illness and injuries
- Reduced employee absenteeism

Benefits for Employees include:

- Lower levels of stress
- Increased well-being, self-image and self-esteem
- Improved physical fitness
- Increased stamina
- Potential weight reduction

(*from National Association for Health & Fitness; www.physicalfitness.org).

Worksite Wellness Initiatives can include:

- Increasing knowledge about healthy lifestyles;
- Providing walking trails, fitness equipment and health classes at worksites;
- Implementing healthier changes for cafeteria and vending choices;
- Providing a breastfeeding lounge for new mothers who return to work;
- Celebrating or sending email/posting reminders about national health related events such as TV Turnoff Week and Bike and Walk to Work Day.

Physical activity saves employers 5%-12% in medical costs per year; and physically fit people are absent an average of two fewer days per year than people who are not physically fit!

Worksite Wellness Ideas

Goals

- #1 Create awareness about the relationship between a healthier work environment and an overall healthier lifestyle by promoting physical activity and healthier eating habits.
- #2 Create social/environmental change! Instill behavior change; help create a healthier workforce.

Choose one or two changes to begin with and grow from there!

Ideas Include:

- Stair Prompts. Messages posted by stairwells/elevators encouraging employees to take stairs instead of the elevator. CDC has developed stair prompt messages which can be downloaded at: http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnps/stairwell/stairwell_messages.pdf
- Bulletin Boards. Include topics such as: Summer Sun Safety, Men's/Women's Health, Food Safety, Food Guidance System, Sugar Content of Foods, Fiber, Whole Grains, etc... Develop healthy recipes in conjunction with bulletin board themes. Update monthly to keep messages fresh and appealing to employees.
- Vending/Cafeteria Changes. First, survey staff to identify their needs/wants regarding healthier choices. Work continuously with cafeteria staff to take 'baby' steps toward a healthier food environment. A small change such as switching from full-fat microwave popcorn to 94% fat-free popcorn can be a huge success. Other changes in vending options may include switching from some candy/cookie selections to granola bars, trail mix and baked chip options. Also, in the cafeteria, the addition of whole wheat bread, low-fat & low-sodium soups, low fat mayonnaise as well as offering veggie burgers and a wide variety of salad choices may be well received.
- Health Promotion Emails. Every 6-8 weeks, distribute a company-wide universal 'health themed' email to all staff. Examples may include promoting special events such as Bike + Walk to Work Day, National Trails Day, National Farmers' Market Week, National 5 A Day Month, etc...
- Breastfeeding Support Program. Supporting breastfeeding mothers who return to work is a cost efficient strategy for worksites. Breastfed infants are sick less often, mothers miss work less often and health care costs are reduced. In addition, working mothers feel supported by the workplace. A breastfeeding mother would require a private space to pump her breastmilk, along with access to an outlet and sink.
- Walking Trail Map. Consider developing a walking map highlighting a few different routes/trails in and around your facility, in distances varying from .5 miles total trip to 2+ miles total trip. Display and distribute maps in receptionist/lobby areas and other central locations. Staff can enjoy a walk during breaks and/or lunch periods.

- Healthy Potlucks/Meeting Food Choices. Consider promoting healthy choices at any meetings, conferences or celebration gatherings in your facility. University of Minnesota has developed a booklet titled: "Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars and Catered Events." To access this go to: www.sph.umn.edu/news.
- Paycheck Message Insert. If your company has this capability, post quick and simple 'health tip' messages inside employee paychecks. This is especially cost efficient if reaching a large number of employees at once.
- Social Support. Once health and wellness initiatives are in place at your facility, you might very well notice 'social change' occurring. Your work environment will promote a 'flurry' of health related discussion, weight loss tips and communication being exchanged on a daily basis!

Educational Materials/Cost

Minimal cost is associated with implementing these initiatives, perhaps a few hundred dollars for materials such as printing, copying, laminating, etc....

Evaluation

- Survey staff regarding bulletin board and recipe content
- Survey staff regarding cafeteria/vending changes
- Survey staff regarding stair prompt use and messaging
- Survey staff's use of walking trail map
- Individual feedback/comments/interest

Continuous monitoring of projects is essential to ensure they are meeting employee needs.

Promote and advertise projects within your facility so that employees are aware of what worksite wellness initiatives are occurring at their workplace.

For more information and samples of worksite wellness initiatives and messaging, please contact:

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